

***Medicare Enforcement:
The Federal Government's Anti-fraud Efforts***

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BREAUX

I would like to thank my fellow Members for attending this hearing today on Medicare enforcement efforts. I would particularly like to thank Senator Craig for his leadership on this issue. It is due to his tireless efforts that we are holding this hearing. It is the work of Senator Craig and his staff that made this hearing possible. Also, I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today. Your testimony will assist the Committee greatly in determining how best to address the issues raised.

I have dedicated much of my elected career to seeking ways to improve the Medicare system. I look forward to the testimony of Mr. Scully with regard to his efforts to better educate providers about the complex Medicare regulations.

Certainly, I acknowledge that the complexity of the Medicare regulations can be at the root of some billing issues. We have to find ways to address this problem. However, I also recognize that regardless of the complexity of the regulations, there is entirely too much spent on improper payments. Five years ago, the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services reported more than \$23 BILLION in improper payments were made to providers. It has become clear that these payments in the fee-for-service area were largely due to billing practices. The Inspector General reported that these improper payments were the result of errors AND fraud. Just this year, it was reported that improper payments are down, but only down to \$11.9 BILLION. This is still an astounding figure. It is a loss of money that threatens the very existence of the Medicare Trust Fund for future generations to come. That is why I deeply appreciate the work of law enforcement and whistleblowers in protecting those funds and going after providers who abuse the Medicare system.

Let me stop here. However, before I recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Larry Craig, for his opening statement and introduction of the witnesses, let me just say that I will listen very carefully to today's testimony and discussion. In addition, I will leave the record open for two weeks to receive any additional testimony or information.

Now, let me recognize Senator Craig.